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THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST
IN THE
WRITINGS OF ST. IRENAEUS
AND IN THE
CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT
OF
RICHARD R. NIEBUHR

A Study in the Historical Problem
of
Interpreting the Resurrection of Christ

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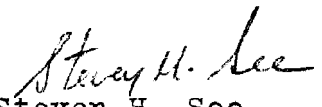

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity today is challenged to justify its basic tenets of faith in the light of modern knowledge. The challenged hurled at Christians consists of an inquiry into the reality of certain events upon which and from which Christianity derives the meaning and purpose of man's existence. Such events are thought to have played a part in human experience at a specific time and place within the context of all human experiences. Thus the validity or reality of Christian events depends upon a sense of history. The question which arises is one that asks what method of judgment may be most fruitfully employed to ascertain the reality of events in history. For the past century and a half, there has been a growing tendency to relegate all valid and true knowledge to the tenets of scientific or objective method. Confined to an interpretation of the natural order in which we live, this method renders irrelevant all "knowledge" as true or probable whenever a situation

arises that seems to violate the natural order of things. Thus it is that accounts of supra-natural episodes recorded in the New Testament come under direct fire from this critical methodology. A crucial target for Christians is the evaluation of the Resurrection of Christ in the light of scientific evaluation. It is clear to both scientists and theologians that the meaning of Christ's appearance in this world hinges on the light thrown by Christ's Resurrection from the dead. If this event is thrown into doubt or removed as a real event from history, then the bulk of Christian interpretation of Jesus is also subject to the same fate. Christians will have either to rest their justification for their belief in the Savior of the world upon the vivid imaginations of the minds of antiquity, or reduce the person of Jesus to that of an ordinary man and hope to glean some moral value from His life. Both alternatives are undesirable since the message of eternal salvation and its assurance are torn away from the proclamation found in the only source that is available to us--the New Testament. The basic question is, then, "Can the Resurrection of Christ be discovered as a real event in human experience so that the hope of Christianity will not be reduced to fantasy?"

In such an investigation many courses are possible to be followed. It would be possible to trace all the sources which mention the Resurrection in the hope of discovering some irrefutable fact of its reality. It would be possible to apply a method of "psychology" to the written sources. Or it would be possible to simply accept the written word as representing the ultimate Truth and disregard other critical approaches. These and other approaches are doomed to frustration because on one hand they superimpose presuppositive criteria of judgments upon material which is not systematic or apologetic and so can offer no resistance to foreign objections, and on the other hand, blind acceptance simply fails to answer the critical questions raised. Thus we can only begin a critical approach by first discovering whether the Resurrection was a problem to begin with in the first days of Christianity, and if it was not, to show how this crucial issue was overlooked and led to the present-day predicament.

It is the purpose of this paper to select an individual from that period of history which was crucial in the development of Christianity, in which the basic ideas of justification were being put down unsystematically and as yet were

unaware of the importance of giving special significance to particular events in the Christian drama. For it is within just such a period that the failure to regard special events with particular significances led to the later question of what an event meant, and especially what the Resurrection meant.

The person who stands out as an example of such a period just mentioned is the second-century bishop of Lyons, St. Irenaeus. Irenaeus is selected because of several reasons. First, he represents the Greek conception of the world which was a part of his thinking and therefore became a part of his Christian interpretation of the meaning of Jesus Christ's appearance. Second, Irenaeus was living in a time which was removed from the Apostolic Age and therefore was a crucial time for Christian development, since the early experiences of the Apostles had been removed by some generations, and as yet the "historical" problems of events in the Apostolic Age had not been realized. And, third, Irenaeus is responsible for laying foundations upon which later theological development was grounded.

Thus in this transitory period between the age of experience and the age of question, it will be shown first

that Irenaeus was not a systematic theologian, but a writer whose thoughts were conditioned by the threat of agnosticism. Second it will be shown that within his body of thought there is found a conception which is best described as a "theory of recapitulation." Third, his recapitulation ideas as the way in describing the redemptive act of all creation embody the Logos Doctrine, prevalent in Greek thought as a description of the cosmos. Fourth, this world view led him to regard the Advent of Christ as the "event" in which all other events, such as the Incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the Atonement itself, are found not as separate "events," but as part and parcel of the event of the Coming of the Lord. Fifth, it will be shown that the conception of Irenaeus reveals the fact that particular events were not perceived as requiring special attention, and that because they were not so conceived, the historical problem arose in a later age and has haunted us to the present day.

Following the exposition of Irenaeus' thought on the Resurrection, there will be a section best described as "Contemporary Histiography." In this section the contemporary problem of interpreting the Resurrection will be investi-

gated. To accomplish such an end, Richard Neibuhr's book, The Resurrection and Historical Reason, will be employed to see on the one hand how contemporary theology has dealt with the historical problem, and on the other hand, to evaluate the approach which Neibuhr takes in attempting to solve the problem. In this section there will be an introduction which amplifies the particular nature of the present day problem in interpreting the Resurrection of Christ.

ST. IRENAEUS AND THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

I. BIOGRAPHY

Like so many of the great men of antiquity, the background of St. Irenaeus is not well known. With the exception of a letter preserved by Eusebius¹ in which Irenaeus writes to a friend, Florinus, we know nothing of Irenaeus' early life. Since Irenaeus mentions Florinus' and his own association with Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, it is possible to speculate cautiously about Irenaeus' date of birth. The martyrdom of Polycarp took place circa 155 A.D.², which would indicate that Irenaeus was born probably not earlier than 140 A.D. In his letter to Florinus, Irenaeus reminds his friend of Polycarp's responsibility in handing down the true teaching of the Apostolic Fathers, especially of John. The letter seems to be a reprimand to Florinus for having fallen into heresy. The glimpse which Irenaeus gives of himself identifies him as one who was deeply concerned in preserving the true teaching of the apostles. It is likely that Irenaeus

went to Rome sometime after his stay at Smyrna where he probably learned the details of the Marcion and Valentinian heresies.³ More definite is his appearance as a priest at Lugdunum (Lyons) in 177.⁴ It was the time of the Montavist controversy and a time of persecution for the church at Lyons.⁵ The members of the church there sent Irenaeus to Bishop Eleutherius on a mission of peace to try to resolve the Montavist problem. Upon his return he was made bishop of Lyons, filling the vacancy left by the martyred Pothinus. Irenaeus remained in Lyons for the duration of his life, until the turn of the century.

Of the works which Irenaeus wrote, only two have come down to us besides the letter to Florinus: Against Heresies; and later the Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching.

II. IRENAEUS' PURPOSE AS REFLECTED IN HIS WRITINGS

Of the two works which we have, the Against Heresies is by far the most important. Consisting of five books, it is a fiery attack upon the Gnostics. It is probably true to say that Irenaeus devoted his life and missionary zeal to the refutation and unmasking of the Gnostic movement, which he regarded as an imminent danger to the teachings of the Apostles. His purpose he himself states when he says: "To reveal their systems is to conquer them. That is why we have endeavored to bring to light the whole body of this evil and cunning little beast, and by means of yourselves to make it known to all...It is not enough for us to unmask the beast, but we must also attack it from all sides."⁶

As a Greek, Irenaeus was not free of the Hellenistic world view that the material world was imperfect. However, he was adamant in his refutation of those who held that this world was either created through a series of "demi-urges" or that it was unredeemable. Whereas he couldn't view the flesh as something intrinsically "good," he refused to admit that its imperfection was due to an infinite number of fallen gods, untouchable by the one, true God. We shall see how he attempts to balance the tension between the created and the uncreated.

From his works one important thing must be noted.

Irenaeus did not intend to write a dogmatic theology of the Church. It is always a temptation for the twentieth-century mind to try to organize thought into a systematic organization of ideas. But it would be a distortion to try to so treat Irenaeus. Indeed, to try to discover doctrinal systems in Irenaeus is to create that which really doesn't exist in Irenaeus. His thought is valuable for its content in developing systematic theology, but we can hardly expect to find any well-thought-out system in this second-century defender of Christianity. Irenaeus was emphatically devoted to the mission of uncovering the dangers of Gnosticism. It is impossible to assume that he had any more ambitious task in mind. Systemization was to wait for a later age.

It is true that from the arguments against heretics Irenaeus does tell us his thoughts concerning the basic beliefs of the early Church. These thoughts do hang together by their necessary relationships to one another, but only as they refute heresy, not as a planned schema.

The basic issue which is now to be raised is a complex one which has several possible answers. At the heart of the matter lies the question: Did Irenaeus attach any special significance to the Resurrection of Christ or did he view the Resurrection of Christ as simply one more event in the

whole drama of Jesus' life, passion, death, and resurrection? In other words, can we find in Irenaeus any attempt to give the Resurrection of Christ an historical value? Did he view the Resurrection as a real event and as the supreme historical event in human history? Clearly there is not a simple "yes" or "no" answer to the question. Indeed, rather than being an "either, or" question, the issue seems to be more a "both, and" question. Involved with the whole matter are tangential but important issues which inquire into the very nature of the appearances of the Risen Lord. Such things as "psychic experience," "empirical experience," "limited revelation," "imaginary hope," are all issues connected with the interpretation of the Resurrection. It is true that the Resurrection is a "real" thing for Irenaeus. The task is to discover if possible, in what sense the Resurrection was a "real" thing for Irenaeus.

Now it is important to note that all of Irenaeus' ideas are connected with what some call his "Theory of Recapitulation." The term "theory" here must be regarded as a modern interjection since it is doubtful that Irenaeus had any systematic theory in mind. Nevertheless, he uses the term "recapitulation" and it is essential that it be understood in relationship to his concept of the Resurrection.

III. IRENAEUS' USE OF THE IDEA "RECAPITULATION"

At the outset it is clear that Irenaeus does not deal with a "doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ." Besides being a modern conception, such a doctrine simply does not present a particular point for discussion in Irenaeus' extant works. The reasons for the omission of any special treatment of this important subject will be brought up later. What is important is his thread of thought which runs throughout his theological thinking. At the heart of all his ideas lies his use of the term "recapitulation." J. Quasten states that, "The heart of Irenaeus' christology and indeed of his entire theology is his theory of recapitulation (*ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*). ...Recapitulation is for Irenaeus a taking up in Christ of all since the beginning. God rehabilitates the earlier divine plan for the salvation of mankind which was interrupted by the fall of Adam, and gathers up His entire work from the beginning to renew, to restore, to reorganize it in His incarnate Son, who in this way becomes for us a second Adam."⁷ Coupled with this idea is Irenaeus' unswerving loyalty to the authority of Scripture. "It behooves us, therefore, to avoid their doctrines (Gnostics);...but to flee to the Church, and

to be brought up in her bosom, and to be nourished with the Lord's Scriptures."⁸

The key word in Recapitulation is the Greek word, "κεφαλαιῶν," meaning the chief point, or in the substantive, "summary." The sense is "that in which is the whole of a thing." With the prefix ἀνα we have the Latin equivalent of "re," so it means to "collect together again." Thus it is used in Romans 13:9 and Ephesians 1:10. Recapitulation is the repetition by Christ of the actions of Adam, in the same manner, or in reverse, that He may subject all things to Himself. "...so at the end the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, united with the ancient substance of the creation of Adam, made a living and perfect man, receiving the perfect Father, so that as in the animal we were all dead, in the spiritual we are all made alive."^{8a} Irenaeus does not merely use the term in a rhetorical or logical sense but in a real objective sense. Salmond believes that "This 'summing up' is not the recovery of a broken pristine unity, but the gathering together of objects now apart and unrelated into a final, perfect unity. Nevertheless, it may be said that the verb, if it does not itself definitely express the idea of the restoration of a lost unity, gets that idea from

the context."⁹ Lawson suggests the idea that the term means, "going over the ground again,"¹⁰ with the results different from Adam's attempts. In a sense there is a new power which does not re-create a new thing but rejuvenates the old order into a new unity under the headship of Christ.

To support the idea Lawson cites the *Adversus Haereses*: "He has therefore, in His work of Recapitulation summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who at the beginning had led us away captive in Adam...in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one."¹¹ Jesus goes over the same ground as Adam, subjects Himself to the same temptations of Adam, but succeeds instead of failing. Now the theme of *Christus Victor* here should not not be emphasized as the primary characteristic of Recapitulation, nor should it be imposed as a systematic deduction in Irenaeus' thought. For, more important than the "Victor" theme, though it is certainly there, is the general idea of Christ's "summing up" the whole created order so that it may be redeemable. "When he became incarnate and was made man, he recapitulated in himself the long history of man, summing up and giving us salvation in order that we might receive

again in Christ Jesus what we had lost in Adam, that is, the image and likeness of God."¹² "And, therefore, he himself in the end displayed that likeness, the Son of God becoming the Son of man, taking up his ancient creation into himself."¹³

At this point two things must be observed. First, the work which Christ has done is not understood or dealt with apart from His whole life, passion, death, and resurrection. The theme of resurrection is closely tied to the cross, suffering, and ministry of Jesus. Thus, in the idea of recapitulation Irenaeus does not specifically single out any special interpretation of the Resurrection except insofar as it is an integral part of the whole picture of redemption. "... who on account of His abundant love for His creation submitted to be born of a virgin, Himself by Himself uniting man to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and risen, and having been received up into splendor, is to come in glory as the Savior of those who are saved..."^{13a} Second, Irenaeus is really more concerned with the general redemption of creation and with the general resurrection of men than with the specific Resurrection of Christ. The latter is by no means neglected in favor of the former, for the former depends upon the latter. Yet the Resurrection of Christ at this juncture

is not regarded as a specific event with a supreme quality of value all its own. Rather the Resurrection of Christ belongs to the total events of Jesus' appearance as an integral part of the atoning work of God. In the next section, we shall examine the relationship of the Cross to the Resurrection and its place in the Recapitulation of creation.

IV. THE EVENT OF THE CROSS IN IRENAEUS' THOUGHT

Keeping in mind Irenaeus' attack on the Gnostics, we can see his thought developing toward the establishment of Christ as a real man. Indeed, the climax of the struggle between light and darkness comes on the cross. "It is clear that the Lord suffered death, in obedience to His Father."¹⁴ The point which Irenaeus wants to stress is that a real man died on the cross who was also the Son of God. The emphasis upon Jesus' humanity is not an easy thing for Irenaeus on the one hand, yet it is essential for argument against the Gnostics. In several places Irenaeus' thought is clear on this point. "And the trespass which by the tree was undone by the tree of obedience, when, hearkening unto God, the Son of Man was nailed to the tree."¹⁵ "But the Lord our Christ, underwent...a valid passion, established fallen man by His own strength."¹⁶ "Jesus Christ...redeemed us from apostasy with His own blood."¹⁷ "And truly the death of the Lord became healing and remission for sins."¹⁸

It would almost appear from the above quotations that the Cross rather than the Resurrection was the supreme event which Christianity depends upon for its justifications. One cannot help but sense that the event on the cross is real

experience at a time and place in history which offers men the faith in salvation. And in none of Irenaeus' writings is the Resurrection of Christ treated so specifically as is the event of the Cross. Yet the idea of the meaning of the Cross is never really separated from the Resurrection itself. It almost seems as though the Resurrection is taken for granted, that after the event of the Cross it was inevitable that Christ should be raised since it was the fulfillment of Scripture and a necessary part of the whole atoning work of God. This would imply that Irenaeus does not find it necessary or helpful in giving to the Resurrection any special significance other than its logical place in the sequence of events.

Closely related to this idea, if it is true, is Irenaeus' conception of the person of Jesus. It might be suggested that Irenaeus' christology fulfills the need to describe the significance of the Resurrection any more than he does. Hitchcock even goes so far as to say that Irenaeus' christology is really the heart of all his thought.¹⁹ The point here is that if the Son is eternally created, then His appearance among men does not change His essence. Thus he seems to regard the Incarnation as follows: "The Incarnation is an extension of the Creator's life in His creation, and the

salvation of man (the microcosm) is a continuation of the history of the world (the macrocosm)."²⁰ Implied in Irenaeus is the pre-existence of the Logos: "And He is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, existing in this world; but according to His invisibility, He contains all the things that were made, and is imminent in the universe, for He is the Word of God governing and arranging everything,...and was crucified that He might sum up all things in Himself."²¹ In Book III, 18.1, he states that the Word was and will be "always existing" with God. This conception of the Logos as a pre-existing being, which would be further developed by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, may in one sense explain the lack of treatment of the Resurrection in Irenaeus. For, a pre-existent Being does not essentially change by taking on flesh except in appearance. In fact, by taking on flesh and suffering as a human being would be more important to Irenaeus than the Resurrection which would have to take place in order for such a being to return to His rightful, "normal," place with God. Thus the cross is the event which holds the most profound significance for Christians. Irenaeus says, "Had our Lord's flesh not been of the same substance as ours, He had summed up humanity in Himself, nor could He be called flesh.

But His Father would have caused His composition to have been of a different substance. But now because it was a man who had perished, this Word became the Author of our salvation."²² It may be reading too much "system" into Irenaeus' thought here, but it is not illogical to believe that if strongly convinced that the Logos is an eternal being, that His Resurrection from the dead is not especially significant, but an inevitable result by the fact of that being's nature. In other words, the significant event in history is the human sojourn of the Logos with us, especially that part of His earthly life which took place on the Cross. It is significant in the light of a divine Son becoming man and not so much because of His Resurrection. His Resurrection and ascension were simply an expected fulfillment in the whole drama of our salvation. This infers, of course, that Irenaeus accepted the fact of the Son's pre-existence apart from a temporally created world rather than accepting the fact of the Son's pre-existence in the light of the Resurrection. This does not mean that the Resurrection was not necessary. It was necessary but not for "proof" of the Son's validity as the Logos but because it had to occur so that the Logos could return from the world to His Father.

If this analysis is true at all, we cannot help but be aware of Irenaeus' silence about the Scriptural references to the appearances of the Risen Lord. The only explanation might be that these events were also simply inevitable occurrences to strengthen what had already happened. That he did not know about such post-crucifixion appearances seems highly unlikely since he speaks of the Scriptures and used them.²³

Although a bit tangential to the subject at hand, it is worthy to note Irenaeus' conception of what was done for man on the Cross since it involves man's resurrection. There is this curious statement, "He who was the Son of God became the Son of Man that man...might become the Son of God."²⁴ There is an unmistakable trend in Irenaeus' thought which seems to "divinitize" man. In a later chapter he states further, "In times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not (actually) shown; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created... wherefore also he did easily lose the likeness; when, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these: for He both showed forth the image...and He reestablished the likeness after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father by means of the visible Word."²⁵ The Word,

always eternal, is the mediatorial element in effecting a reunion with God. And that reunion by the nature of the infinite power of God makes men sons of God. Thus, the Resurrection by itself does not shed any essential light on our salvation, but rather in accepting the fact that the Logos dwelt among us. Whereas Irenaenus was typically Greek in the abstractness of his world view, there is no doubt that he was very concrete in his view of the Incarnation of the Son.

V. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The main point to be understood is that Irenaeus sees the Resurrection of Christ as an integral part of the life, passion, and death of Christ. Somewhat opposed to this view is Mr. Wingren, who tries to develop a kind of "Doctrine of the Resurrection" in Irenaeus. I believe that Mr. Wingren's admirable efforts are to be criticized on one basic ground; that is, that he attempts to find a system in Irenaeus which just isn't obvious as he suggests. The fact that Irenaeus mentions the Resurrection of Christ at all cannot be taken as a treatment on the subject.

First it is true to say that Irenaeus does not regard man's essential points of growth in time as a result of specific events in his life, but rather as his death and Resurrection in Christ.²⁶ "Irenaeus conceives of man's growth, that is, as a growing together with Christ, who is the image of God. By this he does not imply that there is any imitation of the life which Christ led and His development of the life He lived within the compass of the years He spent on earth. Rather, Irenaeus would have us keep our attention fixed on the two quite definite points of Christ's death and

His Resurrection..."²⁷ The last three words here are both-
 ering since it is not clear that Irenaeus does single these
two elements out, but rather the idea of Christ's passion
 and death. As Hitchcock points out, "He generally describes
 suffering and death as part and parcel of the lot of humanity
 which the Lord had summed up in Himself, in His recapitula-
 tion or summing up of the human race."²⁸ The emphasis still
 lies on the earthly life of Christ not so much on the Resur-
 rection per se. Wingren goes on to say that Christ's stand
 against Satan and evil represents the same struggle which
 had been carrying man away from God until the coming of
 Christ. But unlike Adam, Christ forces His way through the
 barrier established after the Fall and emerges on the other
 side of God's sinless creation--"but the place of His emerg-
 ing is in fact His Resurrection on the third day."²⁹ This
 is the goal of His resistance and struggle. "In his child-
 hood man has received an injury; he has been wounded by sin
 and death; and since the healing of his injury is salvation,
 life before the injury (i.e., at the creation), and life af-
 ter the healing (i.e., in the Resurrection), are the same
 life."³⁰ Now at this point two things must be observed.
 First, it cannot be denied that the place of the Son's

emerging was in the Resurrection. But the fact that the place is the Resurrection does not make the Resurrection a particularly special thing for Irenaeus. The important thing is that the Logos dwelt with man as a man. Second, it is not clear that the Resurrection only means that the life before Adam and the life after Christ are simply the same. There is certainly a restoration of creation in Christ's recapitulation of the world, but it is also more than restoration.

"What then did the Lord bring at His coming? Know that He brought all newness, by bringing Himself, who had been foretold. For this was announced, that a newness would come, to renew and give life to man."³¹ The idea expressed here and in Book V, 14.2, and Book III, 18.1 is that whereas man will regain what was lost in Adam, there is also a "newness" in the relationship between God and man that is now sanctified by the coming of the Logos. And this is not simply revealed in the Resurrection for Irenaeus, but in the whole episode of Christ's life.

Seeberg takes a slightly different position on the matter. He believes that Irenaeus did not attach much significance to the Crucifixion. By this he means that Irenaeus was relatively weak in his treatment of the Cross in light

of later developments in the doctrine of the Atonement, especially in the West. For he sees that in the West the Crucifixion was given a special significance apart from the Resurrection. "...which might even be said to have rejected the Resurrection, for the Doctrine of the Atonement has in fact gradually lost its Resurrection content. In Irenaeus the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are integrally related and bound up with Christ's victory over the Devil, just as the humanity of Jesus is bound up with His victory."²² Now it is not clear whether . . . Seeberg attributes this later development in Atonement theory to a misunderstanding of Irenaeus' thought or to Irenaeus himself. Regardless of how Irenaeus was interpreted or misinterpreted, it is important to note two things. First, Irenaeus' lack of specific treatment of the Crucifixion must in some way apply also to his treatment of the Resurrection if both are "integrally related" as Seeberg states. Thus, whereas it is possible that the development of the Atonement in the West which de-emphasized the Resurrection came about from Irenaeus' ideas, it does not follow that the importance of the Crucifixion in the Atonement theory was also drawn from the same source. In fact, one might question whether this peculiarity in the doctrine

of the Atonement has any "direct" logical connection with Irenaeus at all. However, it is interesting to keep in mind that in comparing simply the Cross with Resurrection of Christ in Irenaeus, the former does seem to have more significance than the latter. Second, it is unfair to compare later doctrinal thought with Irenaeus' writings. As has been noted, it is very unlikely that Irenaeus was concerned with developing doctrinaire material with dogmatic systems in mind. Therefore any later developments in systematic theology will tend to "bleach" Irenaeus' thought. Whatever area Irenaeus was weak in must be seen relatively to more specific developments of a later age.

Wingren goes on to make much of the Resurrection theme in Irenaeus. Rather than being a specific theme, however, the Resurrection of Christ is always the inevitable victory in the dramatic struggle between God-man and evil. In referring to Book V, 21.1, Wingren concludes that, "Uncorrupted human life ends in resurrection--lordship over death--by the same inner necessity which brought Adam's perverted life to end in death--the destruction of the power of life."³³ And, "Christ's resurrection from the dead is the victory which has been won on the battlefield."³⁴ And "In Christ Himself

everything is complete with the Easter event..."³⁵ Now whereas Irenaeus is certainly not denying the Resurrection of Christ, he isn't really seeing it as "The" Easter event or "The" Resurrection. What Irenaeus does say in V.21.1 is, "Therefore our Lord confesses Himself to be the Son of man, summing up in Himself that original man from whom the race that was born of woman sprang. He came in order that, as through a beaten man our race descended into death, by a victorious man we might ascend into life. And as through a man death received the palm against us, so we through a man should obtain the palm over death." It is interesting that here, as in other places, the idea of His Coming into the world is the really important event to be considered.* In view of the fact that Irenaeus was writing against Gnostics,

*Note: It is important at this juncture to emphasize the fact that Irenaeus, unlike later thinkers, did not deal with any system of specific doctrines. He was not a "systematic" theologian, but was only concerned in preserving the totality of the Christian event. Thus the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection of Christ were never conceived as being entities apart from the real event, the coming of Christ. It is in this event that the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection are all tied together and are only understand-

it is not surprising that the Incarnation should play an important part in his thought. And it must be noted also that the Incarnation was no mere metaphysical transformation but a real event. "The Lord redeemed us with His own blood, and gave His soul for our soul, and His flesh for our flesh, and poured out the Spirit of the Father upon the union and communion of God and man, bringing God down to man and lifting man up to God by His Incarnation, and bestowing upon us immortality in a real and enduring sense at His Advent."³⁶ It is "the Advent" of the Divine Logos which is the really important thing in Irenaeus' thinking. For with the presence of the Logos there was effected that activity which restored creation. "...man, a created and organized being, is ren-

able in their relationship to one another and to the Coming of Christ. It never occurred to Irenaeus that any of the specific events in the Christian drama could be understood in any other way than in knowing them in the appearance of Jesus Christ. It was for a later age to distinguish among them and give to them a special interpretation of their own. Therefore, the problem of giving the Resurrection a special significance never was a problem or conceived as a possible problem by Irenaeus. The fact that it was not an issue for him excuses his lack of treatment of the Resurrection, but, of course, by the same measure did not offer any

dered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God, the Father planning everything well, and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing (what is made), but man making progress day by day, and ascending towards the perfect, that is, approximating to the uncreated One."³⁷ The Resurrection of the Logos is not so much the event for Irenaeus but an inevitable activity naturally following from the very fact that the Logos took on human flesh. In a graphic sense the Logos is seen as having come from the Father for a sojourn with us, and when the redemptive act was fulfilled (i.e., the Cross) the Logos returned to His "rightful" place with the Father. The effects of that sojourn are still with us, under the guidance of the spirit. Thus for Irenaeus, the Resurrection of Christ is not the singular event in history, but rather one of the inevitable events which point to the real event; that of the Advent of Christ and the "work" done by Him. It must be

solution to the later questions about it. In fact, it is also clear that Paul really did not anticipate an "historical" problem in his time so that what he passed on to Irenaeus was not simply misunderstood by Irenaeus, but there was no possibility of raising a question which as yet did not exist in the times.

made clear that this emphasis upon the Advent, the total episodic life of Christ, does in no way intend to render the Resurrection of Christ unimportant. Certainly it is important. But it is not important as an historical justification of the validity of Christ's divine mission. The Resurrection of Christ is important to Irenaeus because the Logos was the being sent by God. In other words, even if there had been no specific accounts of Christ's Resurrection, the Resurrection would still have had to happen to the eyes faith by virtue of Jesus having been the divine Logos. That there were accounts of the Resurrection only helped to verify the inevitable series of events in the human life of the Logos.

Now it is important to see that whenever "resurrection" is discussed in Irenaeus, the discussion always revolves around the subject of mankind's resurrection. The point he seems to be making is that the Resurrection of Christ, as part and parcel of the whole episode of Christ, is the example which shows us what our own resurrection will be like. He uses both the Old and New Testaments to show that mankind's resurrection is assured, not so much to show that the Christ's Resurrection is assured. And since it is

against the Gnostics he is writing, Irenaeus is especially interested in describing the bodily resurrection of man, not simply the immortalizing of the soul. For example, he says, "For Enoch, when he pleased God, was translated in the same body in which he did please Him, thus pointing out by anticipation the translation of the just. Elijah, too, was caught up (when he was yet) in the substance of the (natural) form; thus exhibiting in prophecy the assumption of those who are spiritual, and that nothing stood in the way of their body being translated and caught up."³⁸ And again, "If, however, any one imagine it impossible that men should survive for such a length of time, and that Elias was not caught up in the flesh, but that his flesh was consumed in the fiery chariot, let him consider that Jonah, when he had been cast into the deep, and swallowed down into the whale's belly, was by the command of God again thrown out safe upon the land. And then again, when Ananias, Ayarias, and Misael were cast into the furnace of fire seven-fold heated, they sustained no harm whatever, neither was the smell of fire perceived upon them."³⁹

In his thought, Irenaeus may be seen to derive two ideas from these Scriptural stories: first, the godly will be pre-

served bodily in eternity; and second, the advent of the Logos instills the principle power of divinization for all men. But the Logos is not only a supreme "example-setter," He is also the One whose power made the new relationship between man and God possible. It is in what He did that we see what may be done for all mankind. Thus our Resurrection is made possible by His act of restoration.

From the New Testament Irenaeus draws upon the story of Lazarus⁴⁰ to emphasize his view on the general resurrection. "As, therefore, those who were healed were made whole in those members which had in times past been afflicted; and the dead rose in the identical bodies, their limbs and bodies receiving health, and that life which was granted by the Lord, who prefigures eternal things by temporal, and shows that it is He who is Himself able to extend both healing and life to His handiwork, that His words concerning its (future) resurrection may also be believed; so also at the end, when the Lord utters His voice 'by the last trumpet,'⁴¹ the dead shall be raised, as He Himself declares: 'The hour shall come, in which all the dead which are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; those that have done good to the resurrection of life, and those that

have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.'"⁴² Here as in other places Irenaeus' main concern is to impress the power of Christ's work as it relates to man's salvation, and not so much to the singular revelatory light shed in His Resurrection.

Thus far Irenaeus has only spoken of, or implied, the Resurrection of Christ in respect to the total life of Christ as justifying our hope in the general redemption of creation and including man's general resurrection. The question arises, "Does Irenaeus anywhere directly deal with the Resurrection of Christ apart from the whole concept of restoration?" Insofar as we know, the answer must be given in the negative. In fact, only once in the Adversus Haereses is there a paragraph devoted to the Resurrection of Christ directly. But even here it is only mentioned to typify man's resurrection. "For as the Lord 'went away in the midst of the shadow of death,'"⁴³ where the souls of the dead were, yet afterwards arose in the body, and after the resurrection was taken up (into heaven), it is manifest that the souls of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that

event; then receiving their bodies, and rising in their entirety, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose, they shall come thus into the presence of God."⁴⁴ Certainly even from this statement there is little doubt in Irenaeus' mind that the Resurrection was a "real" event in the experience of the disciples. This notion is further strengthened by four obscure references to resurrection in the available fragments of writing attributed to Irenaeus. In fact, one fragment, labeled XII by Dr. Cleveland Coxe, may well be from Irenaeus' treatise on Resurrection.⁴⁵ If this fragment is from such a treatise, then this extant segment at least does not deal with the Resurrection of Christ, but, in accord with what he said in Against Heresies, deals with the general resurrection. For example, "We therefore have formed the belief that (our) bodies also do rise again. For although they go to corruption, yet they do not perish;"⁴⁶ etc. Whatever Irenaeus was deducing the "belief" in resurrection from is not known, of course. It might be logically speculated that it was derived from an exposition of the Resurrection of Christ. Even if this were true, however, such an exposition was apparently intended to lead to the reality of man's resurrection and was not necessarily a rudimentary exposition of a

developed idea on Christ's resurrection per se.

Another fragment suspected, although it is doubtful, to be from Irenaeus' Against Schism addressed to one Blastus⁴⁷ mentions the Resurrection in a very specific way. "For then there shall in truth be a common joy consummated to all those who believe unto life, and in each individual shall be confirmed the mystery of the Resurrection, and the hope of incorruption, and the commencement of the eternal kingdom, when God shall have destroyed death and the devil."⁴⁸ The best information from this leads to an insight into Irenaeus' eschatological conviction, and to consideration of the phrase "confirmed the mystery of the Resurrection." Resurrection here obviously means Christ's Resurrection. Mystery in no way denies the reality of the Resurrection but acknowledges its incomprehensibility to human understanding. The word "confirmed" is placed in such a manner as not to emphasize the idea that Christ's Resurrection is the thing per se which gives mankind the hope for resurrection but rather that our resurrection is confirmed by the presence of the power of the Logos which restores creation and resurrects man to the same status which was made apparent in Christ's Resurrection; the natural event for Him, the new

relationship for us with Him. However, in view of the fact that this fragment is highly dubious of being Irenaeus' work, we should not attach any special significance to it as his interpretation of Resurrection. Since it was probably written later, it only points up the fact that Irenaeus saw little to write about something that was not a question in his day.

In two other fragments⁴⁹ there is further mention of resurrection. Besides their interesting quality of being creedal in nature, they also support consistently Irenaeus' views on resurrection. "And as He died, so is He also the Resurrection of the dead."⁵⁰ And, "...that He suffered upon a beam of wood, and that He appeared from the dead; that He also ascended to the heavens, and was glorified by the Father, and is the eternal King;"⁵¹ From these phrases which have such a familiar ring there is reiterated the "real-ness" of the Resurrection and the power of the Logos to resurrect mankind. What is revealed in Christ's birth and becoming man is in fact the primal creation. Creation in its purity returns at the moment of Christ's victory. His victory is the natural fulfillment of His becoming man.

VI. CONCLUSIONS ON IRENAEUS' CONCEPTION OF THE RESURRECTION

It must be obvious that drawing any "cut and dried" conclusions about Irenaeus' notions on the Resurrection of Christ would do an injustice to what Irenaeus really thought. The fact that he does not wrestle with the historicity of the Resurrection itself in no way suggests the idea that he simply did not consider it important. The fact that Irenaeus was a legitimate Christian Hellenist, combining the best of Greek thought with the concreteness of Hebraic values, shows to a large extent his treatment of the Resurrection. Structured as he was in the Greek world view of the Logos cosmological doctrine, it is remarkable that he is able to emphasize the importance that the Logos did after all take upon Himself human flesh and live among us as a man. The combination of a basically metaphysical explanation of creation and an essential emphasis upon the activity of that divine being in human experiential terms, led him to view the Logos as One who is always eternal and yet as One who has Himself for the reunion between Creator and Creation. As a result of his cosmological view, Irenaeus could hardly be troubled by the authenticity of specific events in the sense

that they "proved" something about the faith in the Risen Lord. It is also clear that he did believe in the authenticity of specific events, among them the Resurrection of Christ, but not any one of them as being "the event" upon which all else depended for justification. Rather it is the totality of all the events, taken together, which points to the essential event, the dwelling of the Logos among us and the effects of that event in the world. And the effects of that totality is no mere metaphysical alteration in creation, but by his use of the Victor theme he saves himself from describing only a principle of change and instead clearly proclaims the real transmutation of creation in real human experience.

Pertaining to Irenaeus' concept of resurrection in general, we must cautiously accept the idea of divinization. It is not an objectionable idea provided we maintain the notion that it is primarily an intellectual perception, and thereby is only a part of the whole salvation process. Being made "like God" does not necessarily mean "deification" in some anthropomorphic sense. Rather it is a descriptive quality of the newness which has taken place in creation through the work of the Logos. That is to say, Irenaeus does not use the

term "divinization" as we might interpret it. He is not claiming that we shall be made equal in power to God, but divinitized in the sense that we shall become the Sons of God. The term is used to emphasize the atoning work of Christ which transformed creation from corruption into "divine" incorruption. Irenaeus sees Christ as a mystagogue, but also as One who bore our flesh. Irenaeus' conviction in this is shown as follows: "For, though holding wrong opinions, they do in the meanwhile, however, convict themselves, since they are not of one mind with regard to the same words. But as we follow for our teacher the one and only true God, and possess His words as the rule of truth, we do all speak alike with regard to the same things, knowing but one God, the Creator of this universe, who sent the prophets, who led forth the people from the land of Egypt, who in these last times manifested His own Son, that He might put the unbelievers to confusion, and search out the fruit of righteousness."

(IV.34.4) In this statement Irenaeus reveals his primary mission to exalt the mystery of the glory of God over creation while at the same time showing that the Word of God has not been absent from us, but has worked in His creation in times past. In a very crude sense Irenaeus might be said to

have a "sense of history" since he relies on the past revelations of God as precursory events in the historical plan of God which led to the climactic event in the Advent of Christ.

As we have seen, there have been objections to the fact that Irenaeus did not stress the event of the Cross or Resurrection as the crucial point in his conception of redemption. The objection claims that his treatment of the Cross is weak because it is only regarded as one of many humiliating events in the life of Jesus. Seeberg says, "While the death of Christ is proved a necessary part of the Recapitulation, the forgiveness of sins is not particularly connected with the Cross." (Seeberg p. 332) Whereas Seeberg is correct in that Irenaeus does not stress the relationship between Cross and atonement, it is difficult to imagine why Irenaeus thought he had to. For, under the Logos cosmology, all things are related to the great act of God's "summing up in Himself all things." In a sense, Recapitulation is Atonement for Irenaeus. To develop this thought along separate lines would not occur to Irenaeus. It would simply be an unnecessary toil.

Wingren makes an astute observation when he says, "the Pauline doctrine of the Cross is some form of substitutionary theory, in which the actual dying of Jesus is the one thing

of real moment for the forgiveness of man." (Wingren, p. 187) It is a curious thing that Irenaeus relies on Paul so much, in language and thought, yet does not completely grasp the Pauline emphasis upon the eventfulness of Christ's death and Resurrection. However, Irenaeus is Paulinist in many ways. An example of his misunderstanding of Paul is Irenaeus' failure to distinguish between the Pauline use of "flesh" as in I Cor. 15:50 and the Pauline use of "the flesh" as in Gal. 5:19-21. In the former instance, "flesh" is connected with the notion of sinful lust. In the latter, "the flesh" is used in terms of man's total nature, body and mind, insofar as it is in rebellion against God's will. Irenaeus tends to regard this latter principle of rebellion as part and parcel of "fleshly lust" in the physical sense as implied in the former instance. If it is true that Irenaeus does misunderstand Paul's usage in his thought, then it is also possible that Irenaeus failed to grasp the significance which Paul attached to the death and Resurrection of Christ. It would seem that such a failure to grasp this emphasis is not a purposeful thing nor an accidental one. For the very nature of his thought in terms of Logos "theology" rendered the special need to give a particular interpretation to the Resurrection unnecessary. But if it is unnecessary to give any special significance to the Resurrection, it is also impor-

tant to uphold the Resurrection as a necessary part of the redemptive drama.

The basic question remains. Is Irenaeus' view of the Resurrection the "proper" one, both from the view of history in the modern sense and from the view in the time of Irenaeus' day? First, it is very clear that the events in the life of Christ and the event of the Resurrection were "real" events. That is, what was witnessed by the Apostles and followers of Christ was no psychic phenomenon or imaginary construction. Irenaeus firmly believes that the knowledge of the Risen Lord was derived from Jesus' post-death appearances in an empirical sense. He does not question the circumstances under which the Resurrected Lord was experienced, but accepts the appearances just as he accepts the experiences of the disciples with the pre-resurrected life of Jesus. Now because Irenaeus was not working from the angle of the Resurrection being the supreme justifying evidence for the truth of Christ's mission, the importance of establishing the Resurrection as a real event was considerably lessened. The mere fact that the Resurrection was accounted for was enough in the first place to attest to its "realness" and in the second place the witness to the Resurrection only helped to verify its inevitable occurrence.

It is precisely at this juncture of interpreting the Resurrection that the real question arises. Is Irenaeus' interpretation sufficient to explain the meaning of the Resurrection of Christ? From Western methods of interpretation it would seem not to be sufficient. For at the heart of the matter lies Irenaeus' world-view ideas. The very notion of the Logos and His relationship to the whole schema of the universe, of creation, was a Greek-world view and apparent only to those minds which had been brought to accept it. The Treatise on the Resurrection of Tertullian is evidence that this world view was not completely understood or accepted by some Westerners, at least. For Tertullian raises the question of the special significance of the Resurrection apart from the total episode of the appearance of the Logos among men.* For those who did not presuppose the Greek world-view, the events of Christ's life on earth could only be made meaningful in the light of the Resurrection of Christ. For,

*Note: In contrast to the thought of the Eastern-trained mind, it is interesting to note how the Western Fathers stressed the importance of concrete concepts as opposed to the philosophical metaphysics in the East. For the West, dabbling in philosophical explanations was an unimportant exercise, or at

without such an event of super-natural implications, miraculous in fact, the life of Jesus would be no more important than the life of any major prophet or saint. However, it is not so much the miraculous nature of the Resurrection which in itself "proves" the divinity of Jesus, as the fact that all the events in Jesus' life could be confirmed as fulfilling the prophecy of His coming. The Resurrection was the supreme event that sealed the promise and shed light on the life of Christ. As such, the Resurrection held this importance for Paul, and later for Western thinkers. Irenaeus, so entrenched in the Logos idea, either thought that this view was the only one possible and would become commonly accepted, or simply failed to see the problem arising in the minds of those who did not accept his world-view. It is very likely that Irenaeus did not know that such a problem could arise. Such a position might well explain his treatment of the Resurrection of Christ. If this is so, then Paul, who was acquainted in Greek philosophy, but who was also a Jew, was more foresighted, consciously or unconsciously, than his successor, Irenaeus.*

least a secondary activity to taking hold of bold-faced facts as they were. Tertullian is just such a person who reflects the Western attitude. It is interesting, then, to see that he gave the Resurrection a special place in his thought in a very concrete way. He says, "For to Christ it was reserved to lay bare all things formerly hidden, to give direction to things in doubt...certainly to prove the resurrection of the dead not only by himself but also in Him-

*See Page 43.

Irenaeus' problem was obviously not a problem for him, but is a problem for later theological development. For, if the key for unlocking the truth about Jesus' nature does not come from the supreme event in the Resurrection of Christ, then the key must come from somewhere else. For many, ascribing to a previously held world view, into which the Christian drama may be conveniently fitted, the explanation and significance of Jesus' mission is not only weak because of its arbitrary and unbiblical nature, but also is dubious as an explanation because the very world-view itself is incomprehensible, or at least understood with a great deal of suspicion. The fear which arises in using such a Greek-grounded position is two-fold: first, is this world-view the right one in the eyes of God, sanctioned by Him as the true one; and second, if the Resurrection is "lumped" together with the rest of events, are we not endangering the unique quality of

self." (Resurrection of the Flesh, I.2) Thus, Tertullian sees the Resurrection of Christ as a "proof" of the general resurrection, and in a materialistic way. "In that substance Christ now sits at the right hand of the Father, a man although God, with flesh and blood, although purer than ours, He will descend at the day of judgment, in substance and in form the same as He ascended; since He must assuredly be recognized by those who wounded Him." (Ibid. 51) Tertullian's materialistic

this Resurrection in contrast to other accounts of other resurrections? The uniqueness which Christianity claims revolves around the belief that in this particular Resurrection is revealed the redemption of the world as proclaimed by Jesus. To treat the Resurrection as such does in no way disrupt it organically from the total events of the Christian drama, but only gives it the special significance of being that event which makes all the preceding events meaningful. What Irenaeus has done, in effect, has syncretized this total Christian Advent with his accepted world view. And in so doing has given the same importance to that view, as the vehicle of explaining Christ, as he has given to the life, passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ. For Irenaeus, one complements the other by neatly giving Biblical sanction to the World View and by

outlook led him to give a special significance to the Resurrection and thereby unwittingly opened up the historical question of later ages. Though it is likely that he used Irenaeus' works, it is clear that he did not derive his conception of Christ's Resurrection from him, but rather from his Western attitude toward reality. In fact, it is in the West that the problem of the Resurrection was to appear in its historical interpretation.

offering an explanation of how the Logos appeared among us in terms of that view. What he did, of course, was not an example of pre-determined, thought-out systematizing, but a "natural" result of overcoming the scandalous conception that God could become man.

Thus we may criticize Irenaeus from the advantage of historical evaluation in that the Greek-world view which he held was not completely acceptable or entirely static. We cannot "blame" him for not perceiving the problem, however. For he was, after all, a Greek-thinking person attempting to inject Hebraic values into his thought. And he was hardly intending to write what he did for critical commentary nearly two thousand years later. The weakness in his thought lies not in himself so much as it does in the philosophy of his age. In our own day, if it could be shown that the Resurrection of Christ did not occur, then the present scientific world view would hardly support the traditional hopes of Christianity. The danger lies then in not giving the Resurrection the significance it must have, if the value of the drama of Jesus is to be meaningful in all historic ages.

In our own day the Resurrection has been attacked as naive and as an highly improbable fact. In the light of

medicalknowledge, for example, such an appearance of a risen dead person seems ridiculous. As a result, there has been a tendency to weaken the Gospel accounts and others which describe the Resurrection as a special revelation to a chosen few, or to even cast aside the event as a result of zealous religious imagination and overwrought hope. For some, to destroy the actual event of the Resurrection as an event is to throw the whole Christian hope into jeopardy, even destruction.

*Note (from page 39): The fact that Irenaeus was not aware of an "historical" problem in interpreting the Resurrection is supported by an article by F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock entitled "Loofs' Asiatic Source (IQA) and the Ps-Justin De Resurrectione" (Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, 36. Band, Heft 1/2, 1937. P. 35ff). Montgomery rejects Loofs' thesis that Irenaeus used an asiatic source, IQA, as did Justin in the writing of their respective works, Against Heresies and On the Resurrection. Montgomery claims that Loofs has conveniently added and subtracted from the texts of these two works to make it appear that both men used a common source. In fact, however, Montgomery claims that not only does the comparison of the two texts show that they were written independently and not from a common Asiatic source, but also it is highly improbable that Justin wrote the treatise ascribed to him. Further, Loofs claimed that a segment found in the writings of Victorinus is also from the IQA source. However, Montgomery contends that the similarity between Irenaeus and Victorinus is not because they used a common source, but because Victorinus was relying on Irenaeus. That Justin did not write De Res. is

shown by the fact that Irenaeus and Justin both used Scripture profusely whereas Scriptural quotes in the De Res. are scant. Further, the ordinary arguments of De Res. reveal a different approach and memory content than is found in Justin. And Montgomery goes on to show twelve examples of Irenaeus' thought which were obviously borrowed from the Adv. Haer. by the nature of their incompleteness or pointless insertion in the text of the latter. Furthermore, it is very clear that Methodius in his ΠΕΡΙ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΕΩΣ relies to a great extent on the De Res.

The point of this is that the problem of interpreting the Resurrection does not appear until the century after Irenaeus, which was probably the time of the writing of the De. Res. The fact that the writings were dependent upon and not produced at the same time as the Adv. Haer. shows that the problem of interpreting the Resurrection was not a "problem" until this later time. The lack of the treatment of the Resurrection as an event in Irenaeus gives further support to the idea that he himself just didn't see the implication of not describing the Resurrection more than he did. The age of questioning meaning did not arrive until the day of Methodius and the De Res.

CONTEMPORARY HISTIOGRAPHY AND THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

I. INTRODUCTION

We now turn to the present day in order to see what has been done in attempting to explain the Resurrection of Christ. As has been stated earlier, the contemporary problem in interpreting Christ's Resurrection revolves around the need to reconcile the unique event of the Resurrection with a scientific methodology which looks with suspicion upon all supernatural, unique events in human experience. It will be shown here that Richard Neibuhr criticizes the attempts thus far of theologians to create an independent theological methodology on the grounds that there has been mistakenly used the concept of Kantian pure and practical reason. That is, theologians have leaped to the concept of practical reason as the justification for creating a "non-historical" history of Christian events. It will be shown that Neibuhr is correct in claiming that the use of practical reason is, first, contrary to the Kantian intention of the notion; and second,

that the way in which practical reason has been used does not answer the critical question raised, but only pushes the reality of the Resurrection beyond the grasp of contemporary historical criticism. And it will be shown that Neibuhr's solution of the problem is the only reasonable approach to retaining the Resurrection as a Christian reality.

II. NEIBUHR'S THESIS

Neibuhr begins his analysis by pointing out the tension which exists between scientism and Christian events. It is very evident to Neibuhr that we cannot simply accept or reject the event of Christ's Resurrection on individual premonition. He regards the importance of the Resurrection as paramount to understanding the whole Christian drama. "The New Testament is clear in its witness that the resurrection was the basis on which the church identified Jesus and predicted His coming as judge. In the rising of the crucified Servant-Lord, the primitive Christian community recognized the event that at once focused its understanding of the past and interpreted its hope of the future."⁵² Thus at the outset Neibuhr recognizes that the Resurrection is an event to be dealt with and, in fact, was the event around which the Christian witness revolved. It was the event which fulfilled the past and opened up a vision of the future.

The recognition of this fact has been largely due to the rediscovery of the purpose and authorship of the New Testament in the use of modern critical methods. But by these same methods theologians have been led to question the

New Testament order of thought. Theologians, under the pressure of scientific evaluation, have felt obliged to remove the Resurrection from a central position and to place it on the periphery of Christian teaching. In so doing, the New Testament has been "toned down" by pushing the very principle of Christian vivification to the rear. Under such tendencies to relieve the tension between historical criticism and the Gospel-Pauline tradition of the Resurrection, the general hermeneutical problem has led to the two-fold concept, "the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history." But since the question of the Resurrection really raises the specific issue of Christian faith and knowledge, such men as Bultmann, Barth, Knox, Dodd, et al., have begun to wrestle with the interpretation of the Resurrection. Thus far there has not been a method developed to approach the Resurrection adequately primarily because the Resurrection of Christ stands by itself as a peculiar event, related to but different from the other events recorded in the New Testament. Realizing then that the Resurrection is of central importance, it might be said that Neibuhr's first premise is to make clear the fact that, "all conceptions of history and of historical reason that do not begin with the resurrection can neither

gain from nor contribute to the resurrection faith any significant light."⁵³

The problem then is quite clear. In some way historical criticism or a specific method of historical criticism must be forged out of the valid presuppositions of human experience and alloyed to a proper hermeneutical view of the Resurrection faith as found in the New Testament. And it must be realized that to apply such strict measures of criticism as Schweitzerean psychology or a heilgeschichte method of philosophy is only to fail to see that history lies in no set, systematic boundaries, offering a laboratory-like matrix convenient for objective study. Instead history is its own best interpreter, so, the Resurrection as an event in the New Testament describes itself, and the tradition of the Resurrection illuminates the nature of historical thought. Thus it is necessary at the outset to distinguish between what can be validly evaluated by objective method and what cannot be explained by it. And it is not true that what cannot be explained by exacting critical methods are objects beyond all meaningful interpretation, but in fact are meaningful in the light of appropriate approaches to them.

III. THE DILEMMA OF LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY THEOLOGIANS

The struggle between historical criticism and historical faith must not be regarded as a battle in which one will ultimately triumph over the other. For the two claim a truth which is relevant to both and which can only be approached with the contributions of each. In fact, if either side won the other certainly ^{would} disappear. Indeed, the function of the critical approach has actually revived the traditions which it set out to destroy. Yet in the revival of those traditions there has been a tendency to place the "supra-natural" ones in another category than that of real human experience.

The avid critic, Strauss,⁵⁴ for example, even conceded that the truths of philosophic discovery were not the final answers in man's quest for knowledge. It is not simply history which gives us absolute truth, but is that which transcends history from facts and is a part of one's experience which is the final victor in establishing truth. But since Strauss held "real" history to consist of those facts which do not violate the structure of nature as we know it, he could not accept the Resurrection as a "real" historical fact.

However, even if we claim the experience of the Resurrection to have been a psychological experience, we do not undermine the truth of the significance of such an experience in the Apostolic witness. For what historical reason destroys, philosophical speculative truth returns two-fold. The idea of the Resurrection was present because it stemmed from a mysterious force at one with the Absolute and subtly revealed in the real event of the Cross.

Similarly, Wilhelm Herrmann⁵⁵ agreed with the Strauss idea that the study of history must be kept within the structure of the natural order. However, in denying the miracle of the Resurrection we also affirm the miracle of faith found in the personality of Jesus. And this personality is not dependent on the Biblical view of the Lord, but is always behind it, therefore inaccessible to historical reason. Since the consciousness of Jesus was and is able to reach the human heart, there is no need to be concerned over a particular event which contradicts the historical view of the natural order. In fact, we should be grateful that the first Apostles had this kind of "experience" so that it was transmitted to us. The Cross lends to us the assurance of Jesus' continual presence more than a resurrection ever could. Our memory

keeps this suffering Son of Man of history alive and His presence is a spiritual manifestation of His life.

For Harnack⁵⁶ the message in the New Testament was not intended to start a conflict between history and faith, but was to show that all real truth ultimately rests in the supernatural realm beyond history. Religion is a personal matter between man and God and does not belong to history.

Even less generous about the significance of the Resurrection is Albert Schweitzer.⁵⁷ For instead of the Resurrection as the event which showed man that Jesus was the Christ, His death on the Cross showed that Jesus was a mere man. In a grotesque way Jesus was "victorious" by setting off a new social revolution in creating a "psychological miracle." The real person Jesus is hopelessly lost in the ruins of the past and only a faith, subsequently arising from among His followers, in a hidden, faceless person gives us hope of claiming truth in the spiritual realm.

As Neibuhr points out, the men of this period were dependent on nineteenth-century rationalism and yet theologically conceded some spiritual significance to the mysterious Jesus. This spiritual significance, however, had the tendency to replace the New Testament concept of salvation with a

notion of immortality of the human soul. Causality was demanded as a demonstration of historic events and since none could be found in the Resurrection event, the whole episode was relegated to the supernatural realm of non-historical experience. But since the New Testament emphasizes the fact that the significance of the appearance of Jesus is only meaningful in light of the passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ, and since critics reject the Resurrection as an historical fact, they must search elsewhere for material to interpret the event of Christ. And taking away the central event takes away the great bulk of information we have about Jesus. Thus the results are that the significance of Jesus is reduced to a hero figure who has won a moral victory. But, in patching together a hero and the notion of immortality, an historical picture is not reconstructed but, rather, a new story is produced.⁵⁸

So it is that in the search for the historical Jesus, the man is either depicted as entirely unknown, though existing, or he is known partially through an orthodox interpretation of Scripture. But putting aside the Resurrection accounts is to put aside the significance of the man who was only really known, and only necessarily known, in the light

of His Resurrection. This information is the basis of our knowledge and is only found in those texts which suffer the most severe criticism. Thus, attempts to discover the Jesus of the Gospels or ⁱⁿ other Christian literature, independently of the basic interpretation of Him found in the Gospels and other Christian literature, is to find someone else someplace else. Therefore we are not able to isolate the Resurrection without isolating the basic information we have about the nature of the person Jesus and His life. So we must take the accounts as we have them and discover, if possible, what was experience of the Apostolic age. Otherwise we are confronted with the dubious task of offering a different story of Christian events from what has been given us. Now what Neibuhr wants to say is that given the two stories, one in Scripture, the other in this interpretation of Scripture which assigns meaning to a supra-historical realm, we must choose the correct one. If we choose the former we accept the integrity of the Apostolic witness to their experiences as having been real, historical experiences. If we accept the latter, we accept the idea that criticism has really gotten to the "truth" of the matter. For Neibuhr, the criterion of judgment in making a choice rests completely on the fact that we

cannot do without the Apostolic interpretation if we are to understand the events of the day. But it must be pointed out that this argument is hardly persuasive, for what theological criticism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was willing to maintain outside the pale of history, namely that there is a meaning to the event of Jesus, non-theological historical critics are not willing to maintain, namely that just because of the Apostolic witness, which Neibuhr insists on retaining in its entirety, there is doubt that that witness really experienced what it claimed it did. Thus, whereas Neibuhr is correct in his criticisms of the rational theologians, he is also resting his argument upon the presupposition that what we have in the Apostolic recordings is a genuine account of what really happened. For a non-Christian or neutral observer, however, enmeshed in the tenets of objective evaluation, the whole Christian story may be and in fact is thrown into grave suspicion. Thus it will be shown later that the real problem in interpreting the Resurrection lies in evaluating the critical method that sets out to destroy the Resurrection and then apply a method which best interprets the event of the Resurrection. It must be recalled that the attacks of critical theologians were the result of being embarrassed by a new and essentially non-Christian methodology and did not arise out of purely inner, religiously orientated skepticism.

IV. MODERN CHRISTIAN VIEWS ON THE PROBLEM

Under the pressure of objective methods of criticism, Christian theologians must first realize that the historical traditions of Christianity offer no deductive certainty what primitive Christianity was. But this does not mean we must desert the quest of history. What must be done is to define historical events or facts. Admitting that all "historical facts" may be questionable under the test of certain demonstrative proofs, it does not preclude the discovery of such "questionable facts!" significance. We must avoid the perils of dispensing with historical rationalism altogether, and of dispensing with all questionable facts altogether. Thus we may either develop a scientific method with its own peculiar tenets of proof, or redefine the present definition of historical causality.

C. H. Dodd holds the view that the Church did not come into being as a conscious organization to preserve the teachings of Jesus, but as a direct result of the death and Resurrection of Christ. Thus we must begin with that which was created to get at any causal sources. The Resurrection is a fact whose significance is more important than the "fact"

itself. An event in history is both meaningful for its existence and its significance. Therefore, historiography and historical criticism are not merely quantifying sciences since the historical value of events lies more in their meaning than in the facts themselves. Now whereas this basic idea is true, the problem still remains since the very historical value of meaning is meaningful only if the nature of the facts upon which historical value depends are significant as real events also. We must be careful not to accept value simply on meaning, but value and meaning upon events.

Brunner⁶⁰ holds that the mere fact that there is a faith implies that there is a faith in a fact, regardless of its historical probability or improbability. Faith includes some sort of historical verification of a fact. But again, just because we have faith, it does not remove the historical question about the fact itself or its meaning. Neibuhr appropriately criticizes this view by stating, "In short, the fault lies in the supposition that faith can confer upon historical fact a type of security appropriate neither to faith nor history."⁶¹ Thus it follows, as Brunner asserts, that facts themselves are not revelatory but are masks behind which the truth lies and which break through to annihilate historical

interpretation. This view, of course, removes the problem from critical methods altogether.

Ritschl⁶² proposed that the only way the Apostolic witness will make any sense to us is by our accepting the fact that the Apostles saw the significance of Jesus in the light of the Resurrection. The two events, the Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ, must be taken together if we are to make any headway. The accounts we have are not systematic doctrines but ad hoc proclamations. Further, it will be impossible to understand the Apostolic witness apart from their conviction that they were commissioned to create a community of believers who were restored in community with God. But^{for} Ritschl, the events themselves are not to be considered as mere historical facts, but are facts attached to the exalted, supra-historical Lord who exists in a special history, uncommon to human conception of history. As a result, his theology is not only removed from the methods of scientific examination, but also requires that man adopt a new world view in contradistinction to the one in which he lives. What was seen in the living Jesus was what really showed the exalted Christ. But the unwillingness to attribute the Resurrection to the historical Jesus leads to the idea of a

supernatural transformation in man (i.e., his redemption) in the shadow of Jesus' example-setting sufferings for the transformation. Thus, the mystical, non-natural quality of God's redemptive act renders the idea of community somewhat meaningless. For, "It is true that the reign of the exalted Christ may account for the cohesion of the present Church, but it fails to account for the origin of the community, its peculiar nature, the content of its memory, and the character of its hope."⁶³

Neibuhr is correct in criticizing the Ritschlian approach for it does deny the two essential ingredients which must be present if an historical analysis is to bear fruit. For on the one hand, history in its real sense must begin with both a factual and interpretative evaluation of available material. To glare at bare facts is to miss the point of their meaning. To simply accept the meaning of dubious facts is to concoct another world which is known only to those individuals who are propelled into it. To emphasize either element at the expense of the other is to destroy the purpose of historical investigation and certainly to fracture the message of Christian events as preserved in the Christian community. And the great question remains, "Will ere the twain meet?"

Perhaps the most discussed theologian of our day is Karl Barth.⁶⁴ Barth repudiated all Ritschlian ideas and all metaphysical systems which tend to minimize the "real" events of history. Jesus is an historical reality and not an ontological structure. Jesus' history is that person known as the Incarnate Son. His history is not a facade behind which we may probe at will in the hope of discovering the essence of the God-man. Such probings only create a disembodied Son, and produce a mere speculative abstraction which has nothing in common with the person described in the New Testament. His reality becomes clear only insofar as we free His nature from the formulae of two static poles: a neutral humanity on the one hand, and an abstract personality on the other. To dissolve the concreteness of Jesus in history is to obscure the reality of our human existence with Him. Barth wanted to replace theorizing with a new, more concrete conception of reality. History must become the category of the real in which historical reality is not the mere objective facts themselves, but the total historic concept (*geschichtlich*) including facts and their import. Thus for Barth, a new principle of theological history was needed which employed a new set of value judgments beyond those generally used in scientific method.

"The assumption...is that one independent theology needs to show that historical propositions actually are existential statements about the knowing subject as well as the known object."⁶⁵ And from the New Testament we see a consciousness in the witnessing community that knows only a Lord who is entirely working for mankind. This "for us-ness" is no mere accident, but is the direct result of God-centeredness which shows what it means to be a Son of God. It is in Christ's rooted relationship with God that shows us the perfect obedience that means what it is to be a Son of God.

He places the Cross at the heart of the Church's knowledge. For it was here that the culmination of Christ's life occurred. The Cross shows the ultimate act of God as covenant-maker and the covenant-breaking sinfulness of man. It shows the sinless One doing penance, the judge accepting judgment. At the highest level this paradox is overcome, because the contradiction in which man stands against God is canceled within the being of God and so reconciles man to Himself. But this meaning of the Cross is only made clear in the light of the New Testament's resurrection faith. Man is not just imputed righteousness, but is righteousness in this new light. Final death is no longer existent, only our nat-

ural death. The resurrection does not create something new, but makes the passion of Christ, in which the Incarnation of the Word fulfilled itself, an intelligible, revealed reality. Such revealed knowledge goes beyond the general knowledge of historical facts. "Therefore," Barth adds, "the special history of the incarnation of the Word in Christ Jesus is not a part of history in general, but all other history is a predicate of this revelation-history, which is a history constituted wholly and exclusively by the single-acting subject, God in Christ."⁶⁶ This kind of interpretation extracts the Resurrection from the New Testament sequence of events in giving the Resurrection no eschatological significance since the Resurrection is the eternal, timeless event that shows us the presence of God once and for all. This ultra-realism assigned to the Resurrection removes it from the realm of the historically real since it is the final and timeless act of God.

In this attempt, Barth's own metaphysical treatment renders the knower of the significance of the Resurrection-Revelation passive, who once encountering the risen Lord, is swallowed up into the overwhelming subjectivity of the Son of God. But the point that really must be made is the peculiar depending upon an historically-conscious community from which his

information is drawn and upon which his Dogmatics depends. Apart from such a source, an independent theology, or any critical theology, would be impossible. But in spite of his dependency upon the witnessing community, he regards the community only as the window pane into the mind of Christ. Such, however, the empirical Church is not and he seems to discard the need for a "scientific" method of interpretation of that very "real" community. And, in fact, his method renders the "historical problems" in the general sense as not problematical at all by going over them to a reality which historical criticism in the general sense has nothing to do with. Instead of meeting the basic historical questions, then, he really avoids them and leaves them glaringly unanswered.

Yet writing later in his Dogmatics,⁶⁷ Barth concedes that the Resurrection must be seen as an integral part of history as any other event and that such an event lends promise to a future eschatological moment in the fullness of time.

Bultmann wants to create a method which both credits historical criticism as a valid method and which gives positive value to dubious historical facts. First he asserts the need for the contemporary Church to recapture the spirit of the kerygma. The kerygma is not merely the iteration of tradi-

tion, but is itself an event through which God speaks. So theology such as this, to begin with, must express the subjectivity of the believer as well as the objectivity of what is believed. Second is the stress upon an existential philosophy in interpreting the New Testament. "For example, the exclusion of theological significance from all propositions referring to more than the immediate content of self-consciousness means that the intelligibility of the New Testament depends on the insight that its revelation of God, man and the world, is essentially the unfolding of a new self-understanding."⁶⁸ And third, the function of existential interpretation is the appropriate instrument to overcome the dichotomy between biblical theology and historical, scientific method. For, such a method is able to penetrate into the mythical quality arising from within human consciousness, which projects its truth on the screen of objective reality, and then translates this projection of consciousness into categories amenable to the historical critical view. So, meanings of essentially existential realities are in a sense "objectified," in a psychological way.

Further, man, in his existential state, is born down by despair because he refuses to accept the absurd reality in

which he is forced to exist, and because of his futile attempts to acquire lordship over his destiny by regarding his world as a group of objects. Yet in this very despair there is always the awareness of his very contingency out of which he must derive the image of a God-being as the answer to his predicament.

How this awareness occurs depends on the notion that all the natural order and history are barren of true knowledge. Although providing a necessary framework for man's living, the natural order is also a net for man's spirit. The awareness of God comes breaking through the order of things into the inner man. And it is searching within that produces the truth, where there is no progressive order of things, but the solitary moment of revelation. "Existence on this inward plane is not a continuous progression of life, but rather a series of periodic concentrations of becoming in which the self is confronted with the decision only the single exister can make, a decision for or against the ineluctable God beyond all actuality and possibility."⁶⁹ The new dimensions which history tries to open up are not to be found in the past, but within the historian himself.

The problem is that such a theology ignores the possi-

bility of historicity and leaves theology with no greater a task than to discuss the human need for self-understanding. Thus the Cross and Resurrection were mythologically drawn realities in the consciousness of the early believers.

In contrast to Bultmann's intense individualism, John Knox emphasizes the idea of community. He believes that theologians can get nowhere by simply deducing values from mere facts. Instead of facts we must interpret events. "Event is, to Knox's mind, the basic category for an analysis of history and the way in which it is known. An historical occurrence is simply an occurrence that was perceived and remembered."⁷⁰ Knox objects to the intellectual attempt to separate the facts of Jesus from the witness of the community. It is in the response which could only be evoked by certain facts that we find the proper matrix for historical analysis. As such, the "facts" or the Word of God is a part of that response, not something different from the community witness. Thus all knowledge of Christianity depends upon the power of memory and on the community in which that power of memory resided. Realizing that the memory itself does not paint a neat, historical portrait of the man Jesus of history, he finds such a portrait irrelevant to Christianity. Nor,

however, should we separate the Jesus of faith from the one of history since to do so is to destroy the integrity of what the early Church perceived of this Person, by establishing a superior psychological position than that found in the very sources themselves. The variations of the primitive witness to this man do not weaken the reality of the person's existence, but rather show that there was a plurality of perspectives as a real person who was effective enough to create a community whose characteristic is to remember that reality. The function of memory is fundamental to knowledge of Jesus. It is appropriated in each succeeding age, thus maintaining the catholic nature of preserving tradition, and providing us the opportunity to rationalize the community's present experience in the light of past memory. It permits us to know the Kingdom and existence with the triumphant Lord. Memory qualifies the present moment which in turn interprets the past. Thus, the Jesus of History, the Incarnate Son is not something lurking behind the New Testament Scriptures, but is the One partially described in them. Unless He had become a part of human events we should not have the slightest inkling of His existence apart from mere imagination. Further, the picture of Christ in the New Testament is never drawn as a

mere "fact," but far from being a neutral object, He is a living person who is actively involved in participating in the life of the community. The total response of the community to that activity shows Christ as a real event and not a distant object.

This emphasis upon understanding responsive relatedness to events applies to the passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ since He is the person involved and since the events of His life are a part of Himself. And if the Crucifixion is the climax of a series of events which binds the whole story of Christ together, then the Resurrection is even more of an event which supersedes the rest in the total sequence because it is in the light of this memory that the death of Christ and all that went before became significant. A parallel example is found in history by noting Augustine's Confession. His past life became significant in the light of his conversion experience. His memories of the past were edified and took on a new meaning when he accepted Christianity.

The danger of this system lies in the tendency to reduce the person of Jesus Christ to the structure of the Church's faith in an idea which may or may not really describe the Lord of history. To overlook the independent empirical

existence of Christ, especially of His Resurrection, and to lease its reality upon the memory-faith interpretation of the community, is to fail to answer the more general question of if the Resurrection was an "event" to the eyes of the world at large.

Thus far Neibuhr has tried to show that attempts to deal with the Resurrection of Christ have failed primarily because theologians have been forced to create an unhistorical history about the Resurrection event. Either we are forced to make a leap into the spiritual unknown as a group of collective individuals, thereby destroying the New Testament concept of ecclesia, or the New Testament witness has been regarded merely as the doorway through which we may pass in order to enter the realm of supra-history. Both views, though beginning with real history, lead to the conclusion that the only valuable and meaningful hermeneutical significance of the Christian event lies in an area beyond the reach of historical criticism. Having been forced into this position by the embarrassing questions of scientific method, the solution of the problem rests in evaluating objective method itself. And what Neibuhr correctly shows is that we are not bound to

equate historical method with scientific method, but may interrelate the two which enables us to retain Christian events as real historical events without falling into the enigma of pushing the Resurrection completely into a realm of supernatural history. First, the problem must be considered as it relates to scientific method, and then to point out how history is primarily concerned with human consciousness and action rather than with mere abstract principles of criticism.

V. A RE-EVALUATION OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of interpreting the events of the New Testament, especially that of the Resurrection, rests not so much in a primitive naivete about their importance and problems, though it is certainly there, but certainly as much in our interpretation of history. Whereas the primitive Church was not disturbed with the "historical problem" in our view, indeed they could not have been so bothered by the fact that historical criticism didn't really exist, we do have the problem since our interpretations are challenged by the twentieth-century view of truth. As has been shown above, the attempts to establish an independent and new theory of history does not relieve the tension between the natural criticism of objective method and Biblical accounts, but only succeeds in by-passing the questions which scientific inquiry raises. In fact, an independent theology of history takes upon itself the enormous task of proposing a whole new world view for mankind. No only is this impractical, but it is definitely unacceptable to the more general methodology, right or wrong as it may be. Thus, not only are we confronted with the issue of an interpretation of the New Testament which in some way

becomes meaningful in the general world view, we must discover how such an interpretation can be effective in preserving the "reality" of such a thing as the Resurrection of Christ. Under the influence of Kant and of others who contributed to the development of objective method and hence technological success, theology has permitted itself to regard history and natural science as realms belonging to the same plane of knowledge. "As a consequence of this oversight, theology has allowed itself to be led into mistaking the problems of natural scientific research for those of historical investigation. Instead of merely perceiving the utility of the growing body of natural science for the criticism of historical traditions and records, it has made the canons of natural science do duty as the principles of historiography also, and treated the data of history as though they were the phenomena of nature and nothing more."⁷¹

What in fact has happened is that theologians have employed the Kantian distinction between the realm of pure reason and the realm of practical reason. Whereas in the former the only proper field of use is in the natural order, the realm of the latter is to discover the moral unities lying behind the empirical world. Because both activities are part

of the process of human understanding, one in the external investigation of environment, the other in the discovery of reality found in an anthropological self-conscious, they are distinct functionally but belong to the nominal unity found in human rationality. Theology, taking its cue from the function of practical reason, has in effect applied it to the evidences discovered in an empirical situation and lifted these sources out of the realm of the natural order and into the area beyond the scope of scientific research. By so doing, practical reason has been made the superior and differentiating instrument of historical interpretation. Not only does this make a distinction between the two realms of reason, a distinction which is far more than a functional one, but also it destroys the hope of interpreting Christian events in any other light than that of non-natural, and non-historical reason.

Thus, the question remains, "What do we mean in theology by the historicity of an event?" The task is to develop a method which looks at the historical actuality of events, but which must avoid both the pitfalls of either pure reason or practical reason. First we must realize that the material with which we are dealing does

not belong to the metaphysical realm of universals since this particular history is not abstract but is immersed in events of becoming and contingency. Nor is our material appropriately the realm of the natural sciences since its nature is unique and not repeatable in a demonstratable manner.

The theological historian cannot ask "what are the facts?" for the "facts" are only available to him through reflective consciousness of men who left their impressions in various documents. Thus we can only begin to answer the question of the credibility of the Resurrection after we know what the evidence we have means. A fact can be defined only when we know what its purpose signified then and its relationship now. In Christianity we do rely on past events as justification, but not only in and on the past at a precise time and moment, but also on the movement of events which are related throughout from the past, through time, and up to the present. The theologian's task is not to use the rigidity found in objective method which pre-judges the validity of resurrection by definition, but first to get into the apostolic mind and ferret out the presuppositive authority found there; then to subject this material to a systematic criticism. Such a systematic critique will be subject to criticism by the material from which information was derived and any methodology employed must be open to criticism from the instigator's standpoint.

VI. NIEBUHR'S SUGGESTION TO ANSWER THE PROBLEM

Now any facts of history are facts for history only insofar as they have had a place in the concepts of human rationale. Unless they were recorded and transmitted by the minds of people, there would be no conception of events in the past. And since the value of an event is meaningful only when it has a relationship to human consciousness, the historical fact of the Resurrection will be discovered only in the places where it is recorded. That is, apart from the Christian community it is impossible to evaluate the reality of the Resurrection as though it were a fact apart from the witness of the community who tells us about it. And so subject-knower and object-knower can never be treated separately. To question the Resurrection is to question the whole historic character of Jesus' life. For it was the value put on the Resurrection by witnesses that made the previous events worthy to be remembered and interpreted and passed on to posterity. It is clear that if it had not been for the Resurrection, what we would know today of Jesus' existence would be very different in meaning, if we knew of His existence at all. Without the empirical church there would be no Jesus

Christ to know about, and Jesus Christ taken out of the context of the empirical Church destroys the witness of the Church and therefore the subject consciousness which provides us with our information.

Secondly, any independent theology must emphasize the mode of historical cognition which comes only from the function of memory. A neutral observer cannot abstract an object or event from the context in which it exists and expect to evaluate that event. It can only be known by those who participated in it, i.e., who remembered it. Thus, the past, as an instance of time conception, does not have meaning unless it is a part of human consciousness. Even if "time" were an independent entity apart from human experience, it would be meaningless for us since it would not be a part of human consciousness. This is simply pointing out the logical fact, that what lies beyond human experience is not knowable in the historic sense. Human knowledge after all does depend upon human experience of some sort. Therefore, the Resurrection is an event which is real in the memory of the community of believers.

Third, to avoid the danger of permitting the collective

self-conscious community of the Church from falling into its own interpretations apart from the source which created it, we have the method of criticism which continues to evaluate the various modes of interpretation and which keeps the sources continually before our eyes. The method of criticism keeps in balance the tendency to "neutralize" the historic search on one hand, and the danger of becoming progenitive of a new and foreign interpretation on the other.

VII. CONCLUSION

The problem over the interpretation of the Resurrection of Christ comes out of man's new world view which has arisen in the past century and a half. The pragmatic results of the laws of natural science have hypnotized man into believing that unless all knowledge meets the tenets of objective testing, as drawn out in scientific investigation, the meaningful value ascribed to information no so validated should be disregarded or even ignored. At the heart of this conclusive attitude lies the methodological demand that all "true" knowledge be tested by two basic criteria: that real events be generally available to all human experience at all times, and that such events may be explained in terms of causal conditions. The acceptance of these criteria as determining all "true" knowledge leads to the rejection of all events which cannot be so tested. What in effect we are confronted with is a dogmatic methodology which does not permit the possibility of unique or spontaneous events as real knowledge. So construed, these laws of objective method cannot claim to be applicable to the general field of historical investigation. It can only point to the records of certain

events in the past which can be re-enacted under special laboratory conditions. Unfortunately, whenever events in the past cannot be recreated or demonstrated, a negative connotation is attached to such events which not only deny the knowledgeable characteristic of the event, but even throws doubt upon its very existence; or at least to its significance. This limitation forces the method into the fallacy of establishing a limited kind of knowledge as the only real knowledge. For it denies the possibility that there is meaningful knowledge that is not repeatable and demonstratable. Persuasive knowledge must follow the laws of the method, and the laws of the method are held inviolable.

For the historian such a method does not adequately answer the questions arising over the actuality of past events. Rather it tends to destroy them. The problem for objective method is that it simply does not have all the answers or even all the sufficient ones. It does not allow for explaining the effects of events upon the human consciousness which exert a causal motivation to transmit these experiences to his fellows. Nor are such experiences that are recorded in the New Testament so intensely individualistic or personal as to place them outside of the general empirical experience of

society. For the Resurrection of Christ was not an abstract psychological experience, but one which was inextricably connected to a real person and to a real community of men. To say that there is no causal foundation for such an event is to say that there is no event which has no causal explanation. Yet before our eyes is the written memory of just such an event. What objective method has done to history is to take only from history those things which fit its own superimposed laws. And in so doing it has by-passed the essential element which went into the very construction of the objective method itself, human consciousness of experience.

Now this is not to declare war on objective method with the intention of destroying it. Far from it. But what must be known is that this method belongs in its proper perspective and is not an instrument to be used in formulating the only truth on one hand and the instrument to be used in discarding all "dubious" knowledge on the other. By its own definition, the method is a limited one and so to be used.

What objective method and historical method have in common is that both realize that human knowledge insofar as it is meaningful depends upon the human consciousness. Where the two methods are sensationally different is in the appli-

cations of arbitrary laws upon that human consciousness. Those laws of the former demand acceptance upon the basis of persuasiveness. Those of the latter only require that the human consciousness be recognized as relating a real experience. And a "real" experience is not defined by the historian as any related "story" but is qualified by the existence of such experiences that belong to the communal experiences of men in the past. To attempt to isolate historical events in this sense is to open the door of accusation which claims that the event is merely an invention of one man's vivid imagination. Such a charge has no more power against the unanimous opinion arising out of a living community of people than it does against a laboratory experiment.

The point is that there is not a need to reconcile objective truth and historic truth unless one is held at the expense of the other. But in so doing, knowledge as a whole is partially destroyed. Rather, one may be employed by the other to further its own interests. Thus while the Resurrection of Christ does violate a general law of human experience in nature, it was nevertheless a specific and real event to the consciousness of the first witnessing Christian community. To deny its possibility is no less absurd than to deny the

possible existence of historical awareness itself. The Resurrection will remain the supreme, unique historical event in history as long as the community which witnesses it remembers it and remains. Such is the knowledge of the Christian faith, such is the knowledge of mankind.

FOOTNOTES

1. Eusebius, Hist. Eccles., V, xx, 5-7.
2. Lebreton and Zeiller, A History of the Primitive Church, p. 663.
3. Ibid., (cf. Holmes, History of the Christian Church in Gaul, pp.46-47.), p. 664.
4. Lawson, John, The Biblical Theology of St. Irenaeus, p. 4.
5. Eusebius, Op. Cit., V, i, 13.
6. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, I.31.4.
7. J. Quasten, Patrology, Vol. 16, pp.295-96.
8. Irenaeus, Op. Cit., V.20.2.
- 8a. Ibid., V.1.3.
9. S. D. F. Salmond, Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. II, p. 261.
10. Lawson, Op. Cit., p. 143.
11. Irenaeus, Op. Cit., V.21.
12. Ibid., III, 18.1.
13. Ibid., IV.33.4.
- 13a. Ibid., III.4.3.
14. Ibid., V.23.2.
15. Irenaeus, Demonstration, V.16.3.
16. Irenaeus, Op. Cit., II.20.3.
17. Ibid., III.5.3.

18. Ibid., IV.27.2.
19. Hitchcock, Irenaeus of Lugdunum, p. 128.
20. Ibid., PP. 129-30.
21. Irenaeus, Op. Cit., V.18.2.
22. Ibid., V.14.2.
23. Ibid., III.1.1. Unfortunately, we do not have all of Irenaeus' works. It is possible that Irenaeus did write something on the Resurrection. It is possible that Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection knew of something on the same subject from the hand of Irenaeus. However, this is only speculation.
24. Ibid., IV.33.4.
25. Ibid., V.16.2.
26. Ibid., IV.34.ff.
27. Gustav, Wingren, Man and the Incarnation, p. 34.
28. Hitchcock, Op. Cit., p. 160.
29. Wingren, Op. Cit., p. 48.
30. Ibid., p. 49.
31. Irenaeus, Op. Cit., Iv.34.1.
32. Seeberg, Tehrbuch de Dogmengeshuchte, Vol. I, pp. 411-413.
33. Wingren, Op. Cit., p. 127.
34. Ibid., p. 134.
35. Ibid., P. 188.
36. Irenaeus, Op. Cit., V.I.1.
37. Ibid., IV.34.3.

38. Ibid., V.5.1.
39. Ibid., V.5.2.
40. John 9:30.
41. I Cor. 15:52.
42. John 5:28, and Irenaeus, Op. Cit., V.13.1.
43. Psalm 23.4.
44. Irenaeus, Op. Cit., V.31.2.
45. Coxe, The Ante Nicene Fathers, p. 570, cf. note 2.
46. Ibid., Fragment XII, p. 570.
47. Ibid., p. 576, cf. note 5; it is very doubtful if Irenaeus wrote this material.
48. Ibid., Fragment L, p. 576.
49. Ibid., Fragment LII, p. 576; cf. note 7; and Fragment LIII, P. 577, cf. note 1.
50. Fragment LII.
51. Fragment LIII.
52. Richard R. Niebuhr, Resurrection and Historical Reason, p.1.
53. Ibid., p. 3.
54. Strauss, Life of Jesus, p. 784.
55. Hermann, Systematic Theology, p. 84.
56. Harnack, What is Christianity?, p. 67.
57. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, esp. last chapter.
58. Brief mention ought to be made of the metaphysical approach to the problem which arose at this time. This idea may best be described as a modern version of the "Logos Theology" doctrine. The point is that rather than

struggle with the discovery of specific events, we must include the whole totality of what the primitive community witnessed in order to grasp the real significance of the Christian claim. But the problem is that in giving a symbolic meaning to the totality of the Gospel event, the importance of rational criticism is sacrificed. Therefore, all history is lost to any special significance, since it becomes only an evolutionary organism with no special connection with past or present. Niebuhr justly states, "The fallacy of the metaphysical approach represented by Thornton is that it forgets that we do not have the option of thinking historically or metaphysically. We have only the option of thinking historically about historical events, historically about the metaphysical implications about such events." (P. 22)

59. G. H. Dodd, The Bible Today, p. 96.
60. Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 164ff.
61. Niebuhr, Op. Cit., p. 26.
62. Ritchie, A Critical History, Vol I&II.
63. Niebuhr, Op. Cit., P. 42.
64. Barth, Church Dogmatics, esp. Vol. I, part 2.
65. Niebuhr, Op. Cit., p. 44.
66. Barth, Op. Cit., p. 58. & ff.
67. Ibid., Vol. III, part 2, p. 530.
68. Niebuhr, Op. Cit., p. 53, citing Bultmann's Theology of the New Testament, Vol. II, p. 239.
69. Niebuhr, Op. Cit., p. 56.
70. Ibid., p. 70.
71. Ibid., p. 78.

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